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ABSTRACT

This report documents current wages, benefits, working conditions, and turnover rates for child care teaching staff in Alameda County, California, based on a random proportional sample of 121 center-based programs. The centers represented various types of full-day programs throughout the county, including church-sponsored, non-profit government subsidized, non-profit unsubsidized, for-profit, and school-sponsored operations. Much of the information is presented in charts which delineate: (1) salaries by region; (2) benefits provided; (3) salaries by auspice in northern Alameda County; (4) trends in teachers' wages in northern Alameda County, 1986-92; (5) trends in assistants' wages in northern Alameda County, 1986-92; (6) trends in directors' wages in northern Alameda County 1986-92; (7) salaries by auspice in southern Alameda County; (8) trends in teachers' wages in southern Alameda County, 1989-92; (9) trends in assistants' wages in southern Alameda County, 1989-92; (10) trends in directors' wages in southern Alameda County 1989-92; and (11) salaries by auspice for different regions of the county. Teacher and assistant turnover rates in both northern and southern Alameda County increased significantly. The report concludes that without major improvements in salaries and working conditions, qualified staff in California and other states will continue to leave the child care field for jobs that offer a living wage. (MDM)

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The Alameda County Survey of Child Care Center Salaries, Benefits and Working Conditions: 1992

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Report Prepared by the Child Care Employee Project

THE ALAMEDA COUNTY SURVEY OF CHILD CARE CENTER SALARIES, BENEFITS AND WORKING CONDITIONS: 1992[1]

Introduction

This report documents current wages, benefits, working condition and turnover rates for teaching staff in Alameda County, California. It is the fifth such survey conducted in Northern Alameda County since 1984, and includes the cities of Alameda, Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland and Piedmont. It is the third such survey of Southern Alameda County, the first conducted in 1987 and the second in 1989. Southern Alameda cities included in the survey are Hayward, San Lorenzo, San Leandro, Fremont, Newark, Union City, Pleasanton, Dublin, Livermore and Castro Valley. Because of geographic and economic differences within the Southern portion of the county, selected findings are reported separately for the Valley cities of Pleasanton, Dublin and Livermore.

In Spring 1992, information based on responses to the Child Care Staff Salary and Working Conditions Survey[2] was collected from a random proportional sample of 121 center-based programs, representing a 71% response rate. This study utilized the same sampling technique employed in all previous Alameda County salary surveys. The centers represented various types of full-day programs and were distributed throughout the County: 16 were church sponsored, 38 were non-profit non subsidized, 12 were government subsidized non-profits, 38 were private proprietary (for-profit), and 17 were operated by a school or college district. Represented in the survey findings are 1821 staff members: 905 teachers, 647 assistants, 151 teacher/directors and 118 directors.

Only four programs in the survey served infants and toddlers exclusively, while 33 programs served only school age children and 54 served only preschoolers. The remaining programs served a mixed age group of children. Infants and toddlers were served in 88 programs.

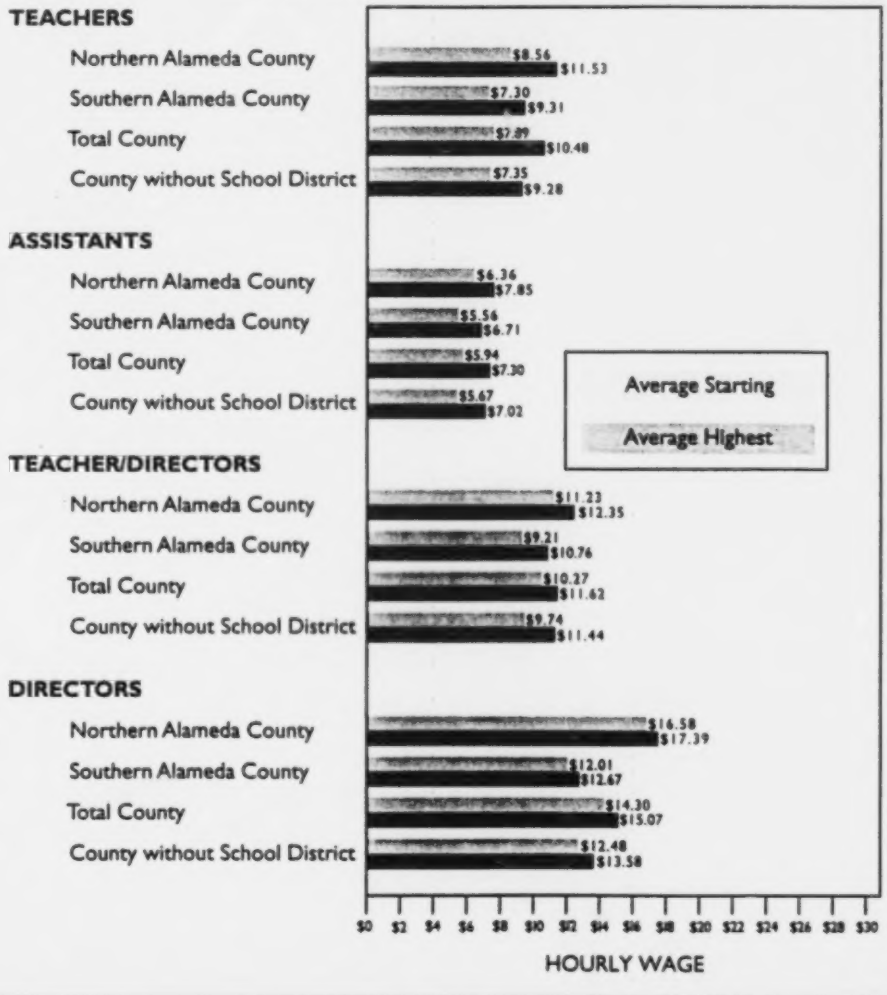
In the following pages, findings are first reported for the entire county with sub-sections following for the northern, southern and Valley areas.

COUNTY-WIDE FINDINGS[3]

Demographics

In 1992 the majority of child care staff in the county, as in the field, were women in their child bearing years. While men comprised only 4% of teachers and 11% of assistant

CHART 1: SALARIES BY REGION



teachers, this proportion is higher than the national average of 3% male teaching staff.[4] As would be expected based on County residency patterns, more black teachers and assistants were employed in northern Alameda County and more Latina teachers and white teachers and assistants were employed in South County.

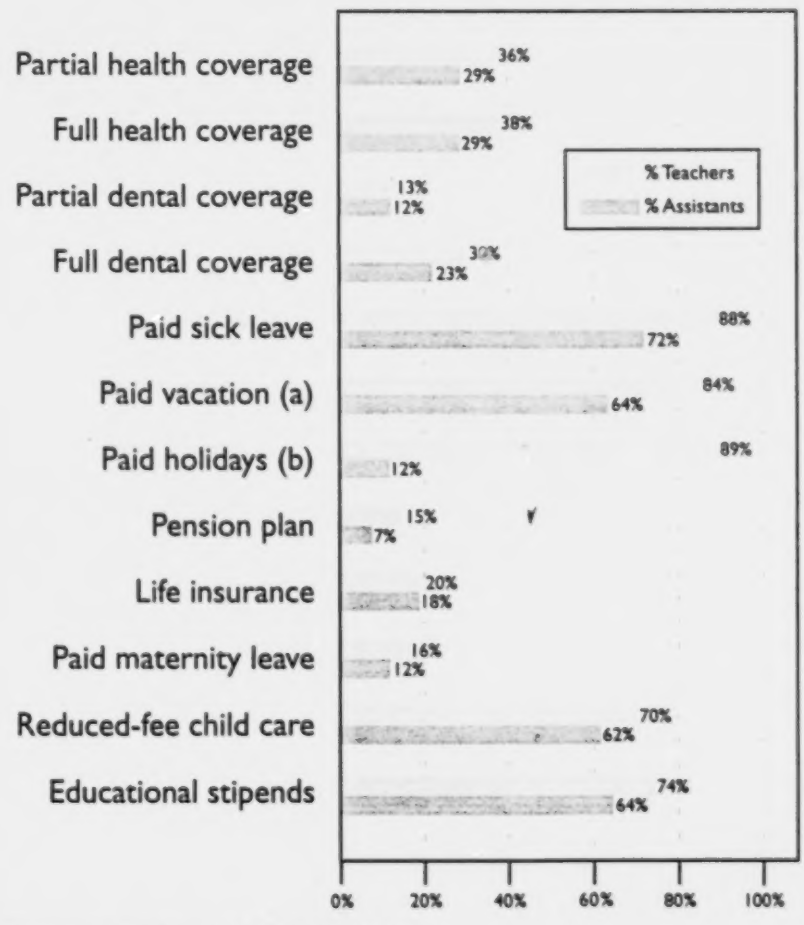
Salaries

The salary findings in Chart I reflect the starting hourly wages as well as the highest hourly wages offered to teachers, assistants, teacher/directors, and directors throughout the county in different types of programs. School and college district programs paid much higher wages than other program types for all positions except assistants. Approximately 30% of the teachers, 12% of teacher/directors and 25% of directors in the sample were employed in school or college district programs paying the higher salaries.

Average child care center wages throughout the county for all other program types are substantially lower. For non-school district positions, the average wage translates to an annual salary of only $12,862 for teachers and $9,922 for assistants, based on the average child care work schedule of 35 hours a week, 50 weeks a year. Even the highest non-school district teacher salary is only $16,240 a year. Little difference in wages exists for staff working in non-profit subsidized, non-profit non-subsidized or for-profit programs. Salaries were higher for staff across all job categories and program types in the northern portion of the county.

A word of caution: The results of any survey can be misleading if not taken in context. When we report average salaries, we are not recommending them as the appropriate level of compensation for the field. Rather, we are hoping they will be used as a guide. In such an underpaid field, even those paying the most must strive toward improvement. According to the National Child Care Staffing Study,[5] child care teaching staff receive only one third of the earnings of comparably educated men, and one half of comparably educated women, in the civilian work force.

CHART 2: BENEFITS, ALAMEDA COUNTY

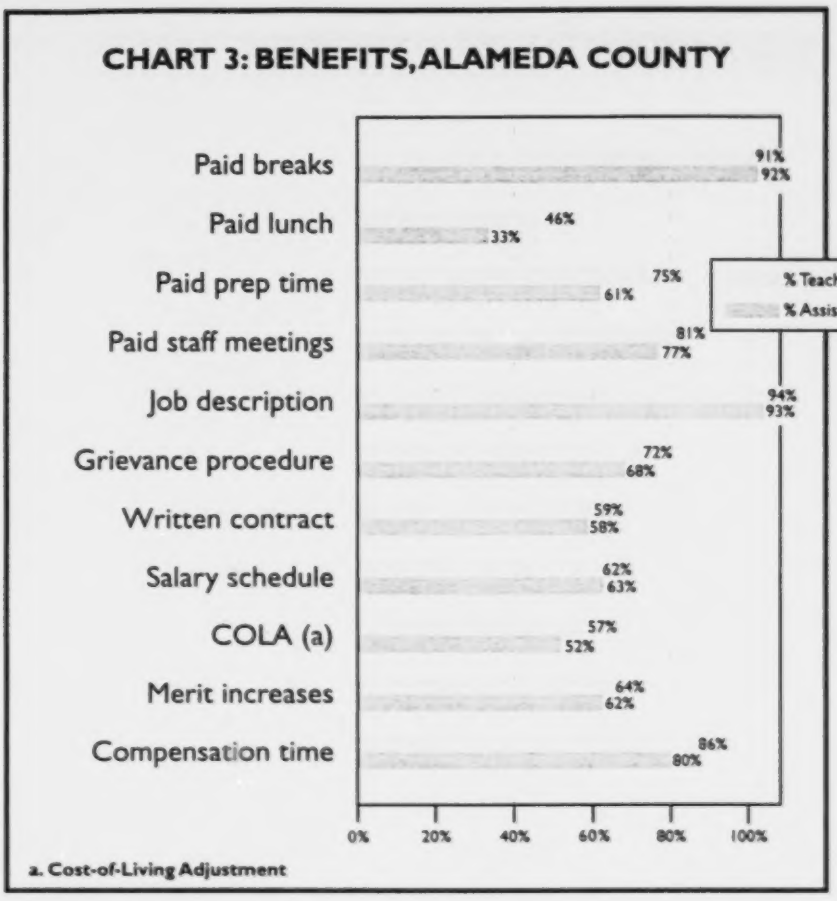


a. The average number of vacation days is 11.
b. The average number of paid holidays is 10.

Benefits and Working Conditions

Benefits are a major way to supplement earnings, yet only 38% of teachers and 29% of assistants in the County had full health coverage. Even fewer received dental and other benefits. School district programs were more likely to provide fully paid health and dental benefits for teachers and assistants: 94% of teachers and 55% of assistants in these programs received full health coverage, compared to 29% of teachers and 25% of assistants in other programs. School districts were also more likely to provide life insurance and pensions for teachers.

The only benefit received more frequently by teachers and assistants employed by non-school district programs was reduced fee for child care for their own children, a benefit utilized by only some of the teaching staff.



Turnover

Well-trained and consistent staff are key ingredients of quality child care programs. In Alameda County, as in many communities across the country, low wages continue to fuel high staff turnover and undermine the caliber of services children receive. Turnover rates averaged 35% for teachers, 64% for assistants and 46% for teacher directors throughout the county. Programs paying lowest salaries for experienced assistants reported highest turnover. Those providing the least supportive working conditions for teachers also reported higher turnover.

There were no significant differences in turnover based on program type. Notably, school district programs demonstrated only a trend toward lower turnover, even for those job categories paying significantly higher wages than other program types. This may reflect the lack of sufficient cost of living increases in school district programs in the last couple of years.

Turnover was particularly high among directors, averaging 68% county wide, reflecting perhaps the difficulty of managing a program without sufficient resources to attract and retain properly trained personnel. Directors reported retaining staff as the most serious staffing problem they faced. Finding training resources was also considered a serious problem. There were no significant differences in salaries or turnover among centers serving infant-toddler aged children or only school-aged children.

Collective Bargaining

In the county overall, 23% of teachers and 16% of assistants were protected by a collective bargaining agreement, compared to 4% nationally. Teachers and assistants in centers with collective bargaining agreements received higher starting salaries and experienced better working conditions and better benefits. In North County, school districts were more likely to be unionized and paid the highest wages across all job categories.

Quality Measures

Throughout the county, programs requiring staff to have more stringent qualifications than required by licensing paid higher salaries to experienced staff and provided better working conditions.

Across the country, assistant teachers working in centers with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation were more likely to have better working conditions but not necessarily higher salaries, better benefits or lower turnover in any job category. Previous surveys in Alameda and other communities, however, have documented a link between NAEYC accreditation, higher salaries for experienced teachers and assistants, subsequent lower turnover and higher quality programs.[8]

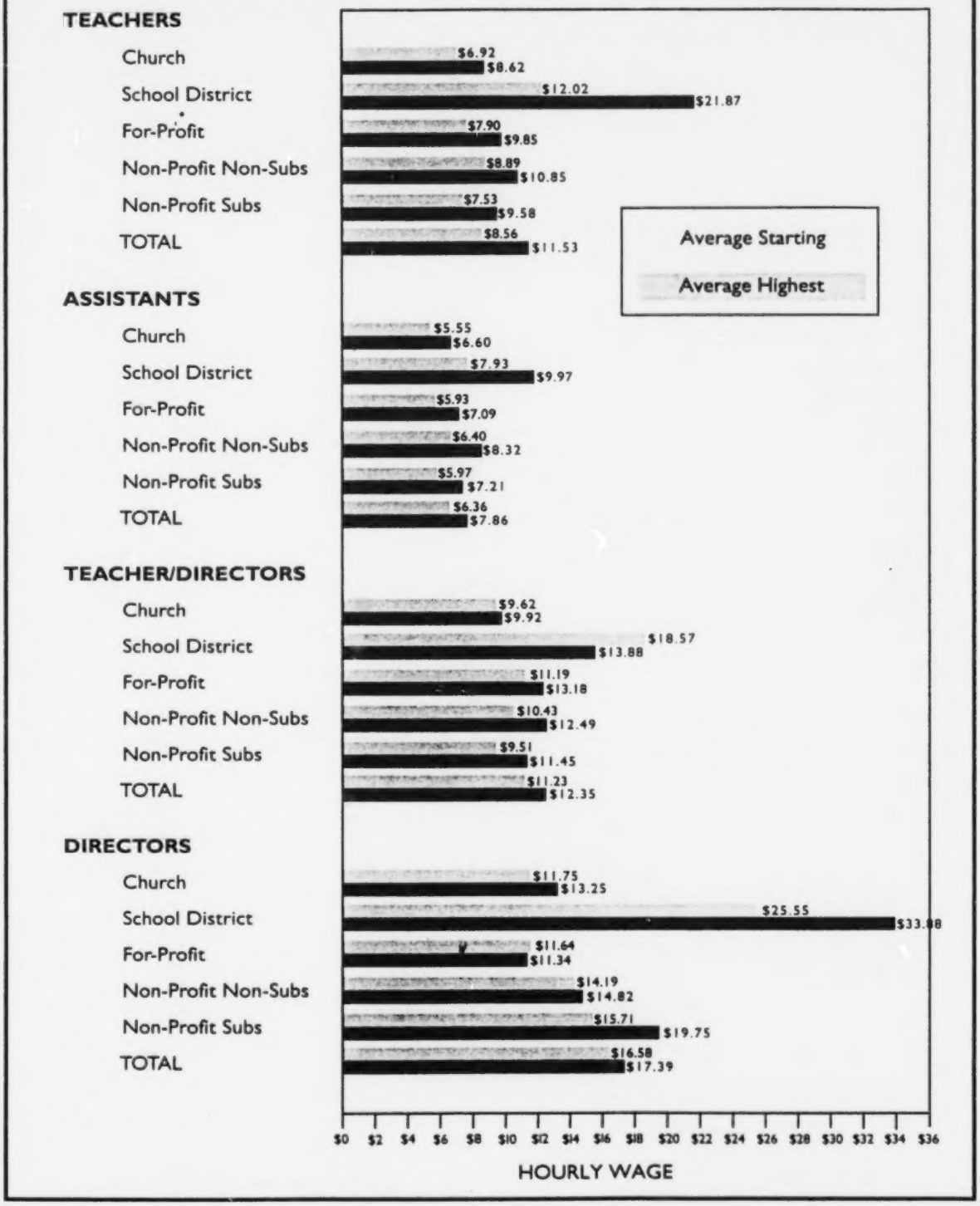
NORTH COUNTY FINDINGS

In North county, 57 centers were surveyed, representing a 63% return rate. Of these, 22 were non-profit non-subsidized, 9 were non-profit subsidized, 18 were private proprietary and 8 were school or college district programs.

Demographics

The age and ethnic composition of the child care work force in Northern Alameda county has changed somewhat in recent years. The number of minority teachers decreased by

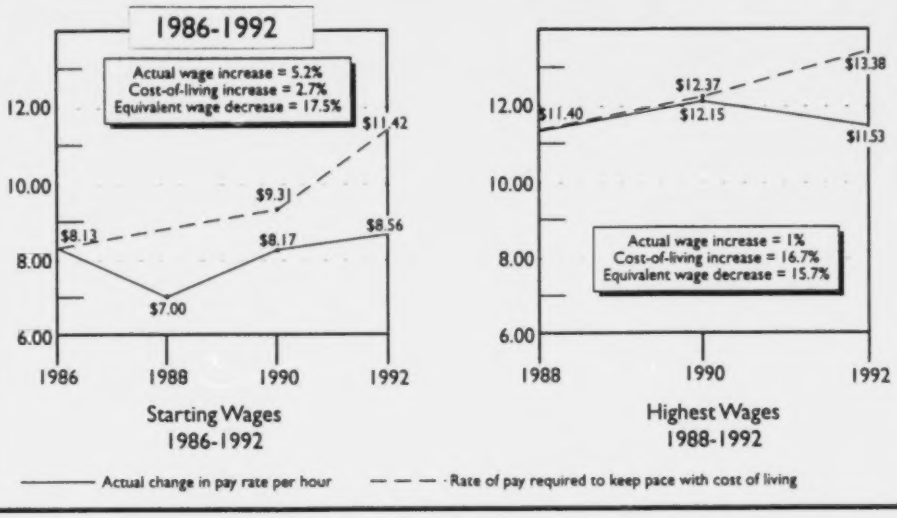
CHART 4: SALARIES BY AUSPICE: NORTHERN ALAMEDA CO.



15% and assistants by 8% between 1990 and 1992. Non-profit subsidized programs employed a greater percentage of Black teachers than for-profit or non-profit non-subsidized programs. The highest percentage of minority teachers were employed in school district centers.

Between 1990 and 1992 the percentage of teachers under 30 rose from slightly over 25% to 38% and the percent of assistants under 30 rose from approximately 50% to 59%. Younger teachers were more likely to be employed in school district programs. Younger assistants were more likely to be

CHART 5: TRENDS IN TEACHERS' WAGES NORTHERN ALAMEDA CO.



were protected by collective bargaining agreements.

The decrease in real wages for starting teachers in northern Alameda County parallels that documented for child care teaching staff in other communities across the country. Notably, there has been a 17.5% decrease in teachers wages in northern Alameda County since 1986, but a 17.3% increase in starting director salaries. (See charts 5, 6 and 7).

Benefits and Working Conditions

Benefits and working conditions for northern Alameda County teaching staff are similar to those in the rest of the country.[7] Thirty-seven percent of teachers and assistants received full health coverage, and 21% received full dental coverage. One hundred percent of school district teachers and 80% of school district assistants were fully covered. School/college districts were also more likely than other programs to fully pay benefits and cover dependents' benefit costs, as well. They are also more likely to provide life insurance for teachers and pensions to both teachers and assistants. Church programs were less likely to provide health benefits than all others.

employed in non-subsidized programs, particularly for-profits. There was virtually no change in the percentage of men working in the field in recent years.

Salaries

The Consumer Price Index rose by 8.2% in the Bay Area since 1990, yet wages for all positions except directors remained constant or decreased slightly between 1990 and 1992. Starting wages for directors rose about $1.50 an hour. Starting salaries for teachers rose minimally but wages for experienced teachers dropped.

When adjusted for inflation, all wages decreased for all center based employees except starting directors. Lack of adequate cost-of-living increases over the past several years is reflected in those figures (see Trend Charts).

School/college programs paid highest starting and highest high salaries for teachers and assistants. Teachers in these programs were also the most likely to be covered by collective bargaining agreements. Twenty-three percent of teachers and 16% of assistants

CHART 6: TRENDS IN ASSISTANTS' WAGES NORTHERN ALAMEDA CO.

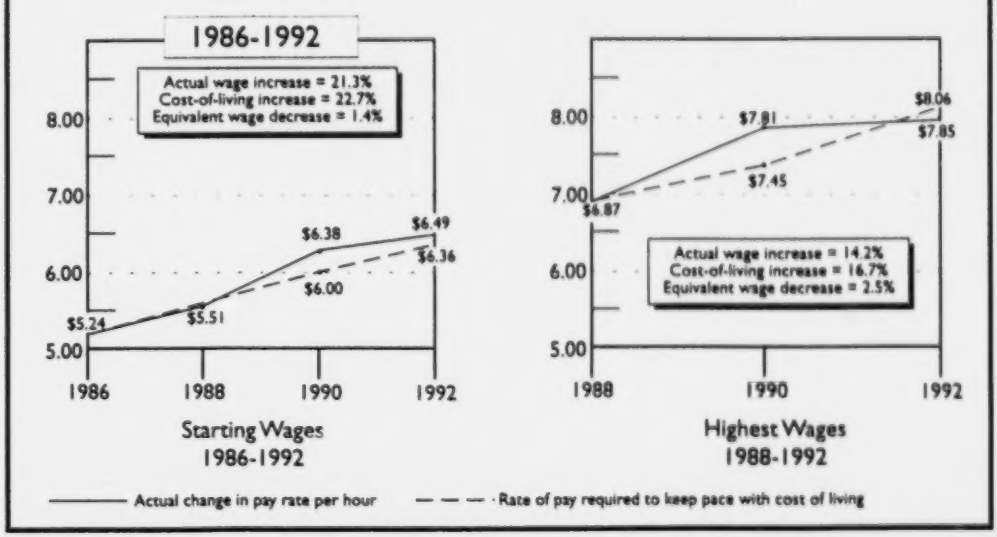
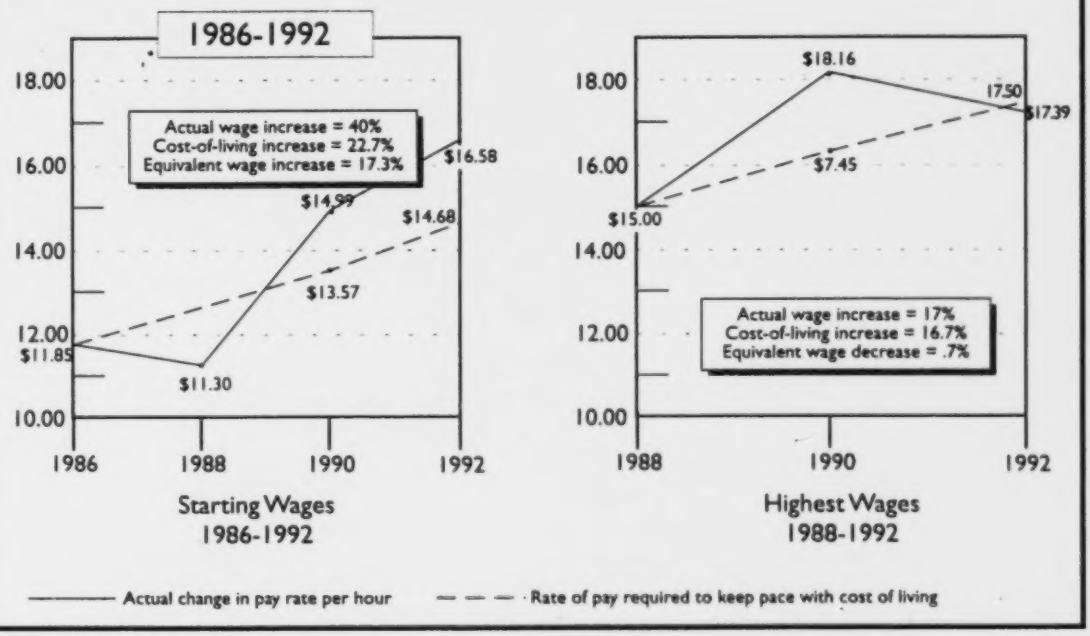


CHART 7: TRENDS IN DIRECTORS' WAGES NORTHERN ALAMEDA CO.



Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA's) are a consistent, dependable way to help maintain income. The percentage of programs offering this benefit decreased by 15% for teachers and 13% for assistants between 1990 and 1992 while the number of programs offering merit raises increased by 20% for both teachers and assistants between 1990 and 1992 church and for-profit centers were significantly less likely than the others to offer merit raises. In northern Alameda County, school districts and non-profit subsidized centers were less likely than all others to offer reduced-fee child care to teachers and assistants.

Turnover

Turnover has increased by 12% for teachers and 16% among assistant teachers since 1990. This parallels the decrease in pay for both teachers and assistants since 1990, and supports the correlation documented in the National Child Care Staffing Study between lower salaries and higher turnover. The survey data reveal a steady pattern of increased turnover following decreased salaries, and vice versa. Between 1984 and 1986, when salaries increased by 20% for teachers and 9% for assistants, turnover decreased by 8% for teachers and 6% for assistants. But between 1986 and 1988, when salaries for teachers decreased and assistant salaries increased negligibly, turnover jumped from 17% to 36% for teachers and from 24% to 48% for assistants. In 1990, when wages increased, turnover decreased, although it remained high. This year, as wages remained nearly the same, turnover increased by 12%.

SOUTH COUNTY FINDINGS

In South County (including the Valley area), 64 centers were surveyed, representing a 79% return rate. Of these, 32 were non-profit non-subsidized, 3 were non-profit subsidized, 20 were private proprietary and 9 were school district/college campus programs.

Demographics

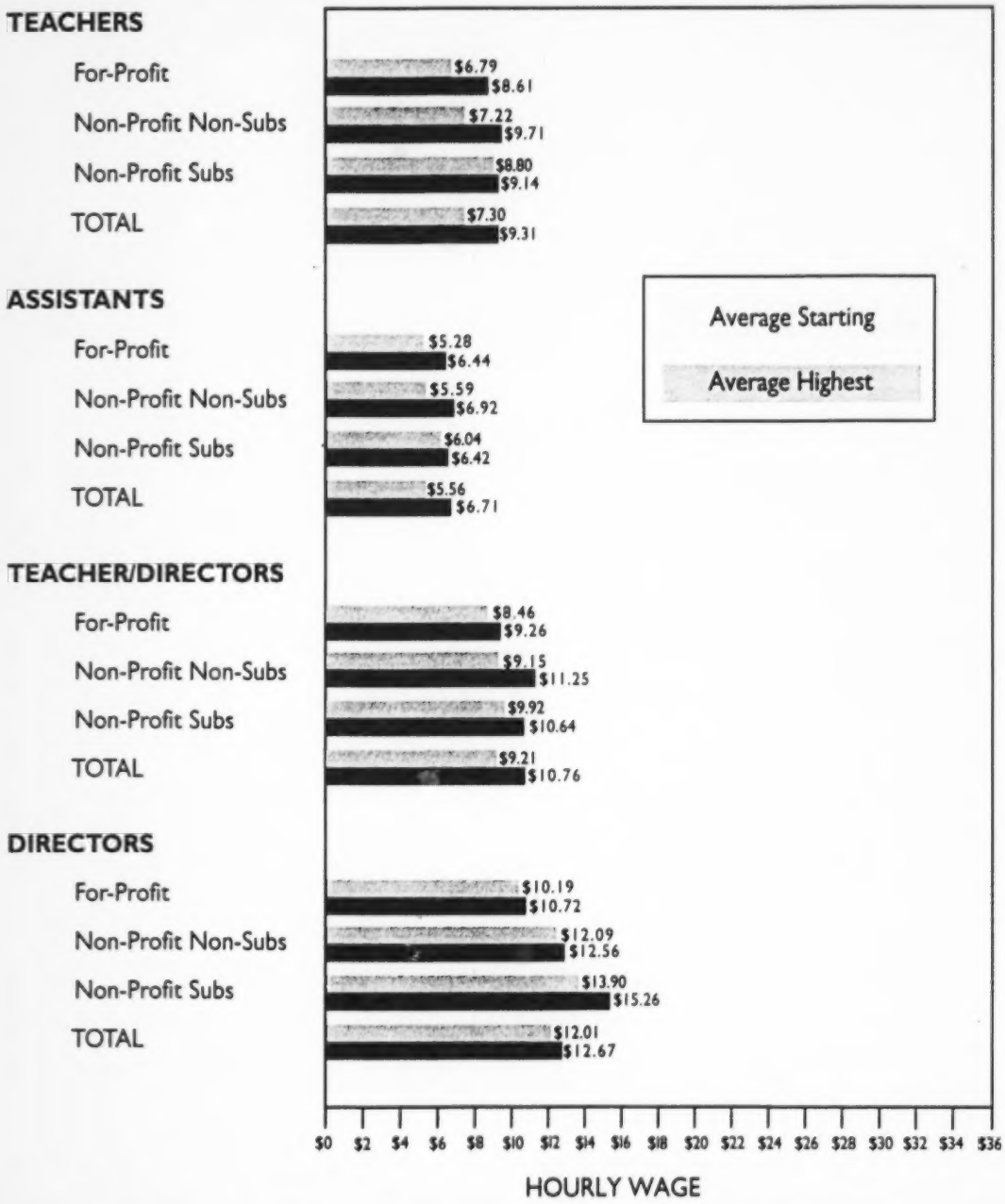
The percentage of men employed as teachers and assistants in southern Alameda County increased from 1% to 6% between 1989 and 1992. There was little change in the overall number of minority teachers in South County between 1989 and 1992. However, there were more Black assistants employed in 1992 than in 1989. Subsidized programs were more likely to employ Latina assistants.

The number of teachers under 30 years of age declined from 50% in 1989 to 38% in 1992 and the number of assistants under 30 declined from 66% in 1989 to 57% in 1992. More experienced teachers were more likely to be employed in subsidized programs.

Salaries

In South County, wages rose very slightly over the past two years in all categories except for experienced teacher/directors. The average starting wage (including the

CHART 8: SALARIES BY AUSPICE: SOUTHERN ALAMEDA CO.



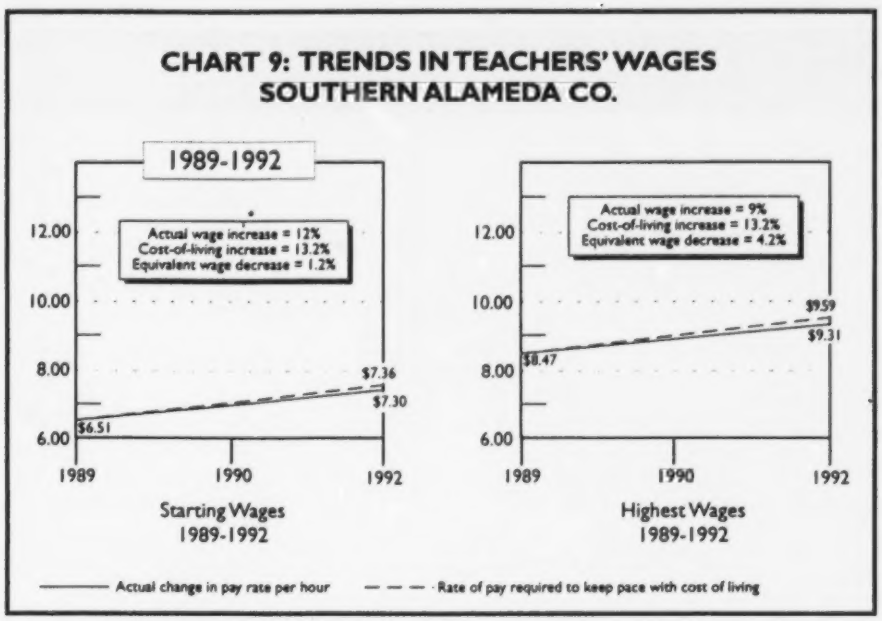
higher paying school districts) of $7.30 per hour for teachers and $5.56/hour for assistants translates to an annual starting income of $12,775 for teachers and $9730 for assistants. High salary ($9.31/hr for experienced teachers and $6.71 for assistants) translates to an income of $16,292 for teachers and $11,742 for assistants. Non-profit subsidized programs paid higher starting salary and higher high salaries for teachers, and higher starting salaries for assistants.

Non-profit subsidized programs were more likely to work with collective bargaining agreements, and these programs paid higher starting salaries to teachers and assistants.

When adjusted for inflation, all job categories in southern Alameda County experienced a decrease in both starting and highest wages since 1989. (See Trend Charts below).

Benefits and Working Conditions

Benefits and working conditions for southern Alameda County teaching staff are similar to those in the rest of the county. In the last three years, partial health and dental cov-



erage decreased among teachers and assistants, while full health and dental coverage increased. Still only 39% of teachers received full health or dental coverage.

As with North County, the percentage of programs offering COLA's for South County teachers and assistants decreased in the past two years - from 74% in 1990 to 61% in 1992 for teachers and from 73% in 1990 to 51% this year for assistants.

Eighteen percent of teachers and 13% of assistants in the South County were protected by a collective bargaining agreement. Non-profit subsidized programs are more likely to have collective bargaining agreements for teachers.

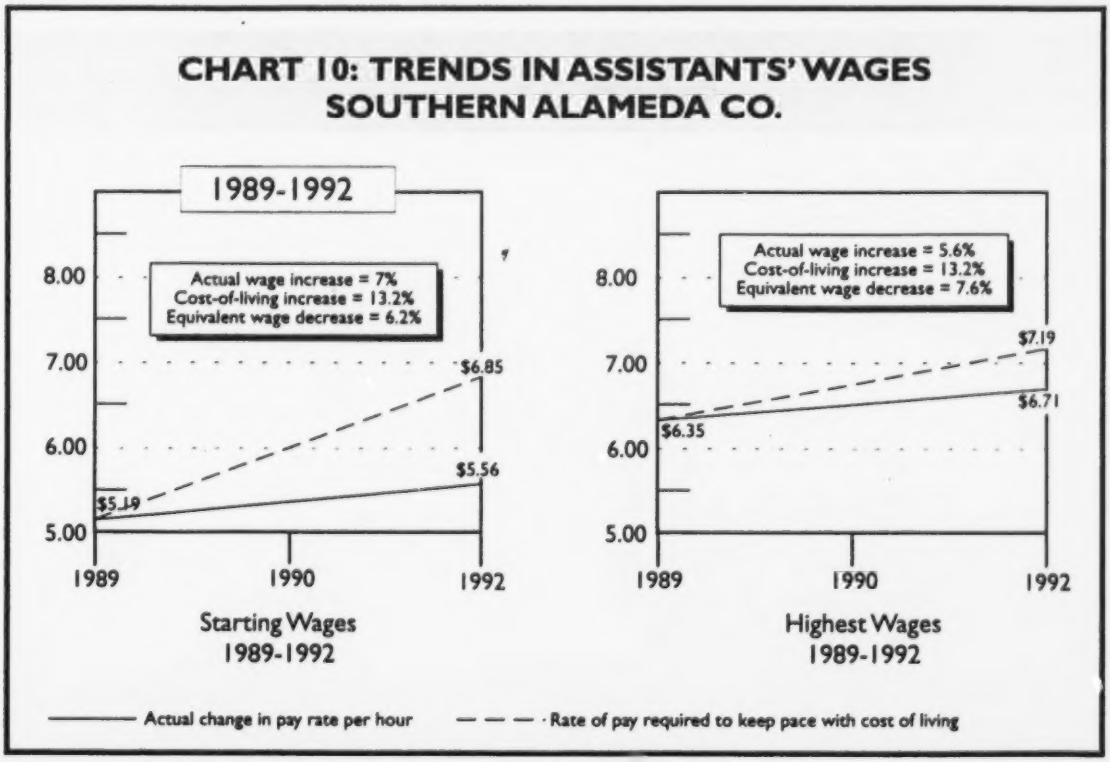
Teachers in for-profit programs received fewer paid vacation days than those in other centers.

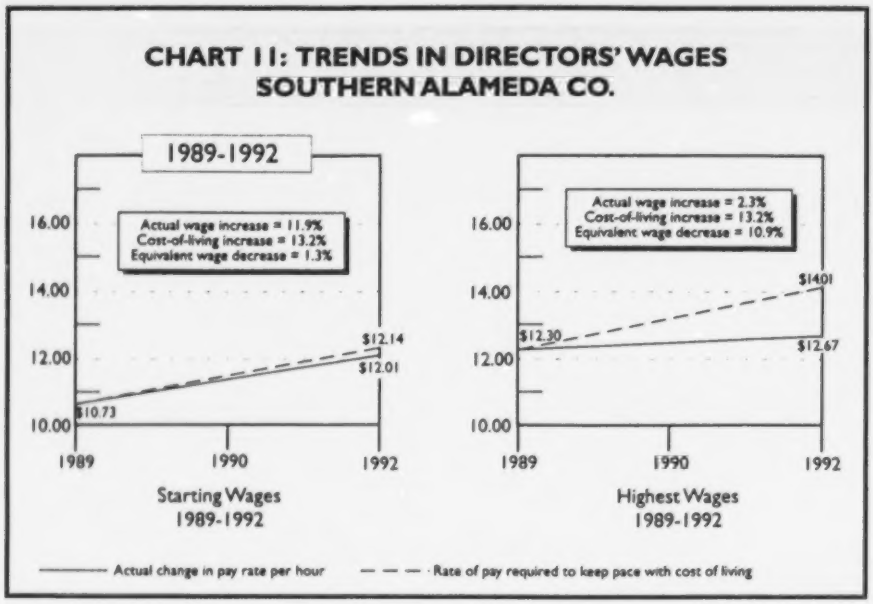
Turnover

Turnover has increased mostly for teachers, from 30% in 1989 to 34% for teachers in 1992, but dramatically for assistants, from 45% in 1989 to 69% in 1992. This reflects the basic inadequacy of these salaries. Director turnover in South County was very high (78%).

VALLEY AREA

The Valley area is included in the South County report, but because of its unique geographic and demographic situation, findings for key issues of salary, turnover and benefits are described below. The Valley area had a return rate of 92%, with 22 centers surveyed. Of those, 12 were non-profit non-subsidized, 1 was non-profit subsidized, 5 were private proprietary and 4 were school district/college campus programs.





requires action at many levels of society. The federal government has recently recognized the need to improve the compensation of teachers and providers caring for young children. In the 1990 Re-authorizations for Head Start and Military Child Care, specific provisions were made for raising salaries. In the recently passed Child Care and Development Block Grant the federal government committed funds for improving the quality of child care services. Increasing compensation and training options for teachers and providers were included in the list of activities to improve quality. Thus, each state now has the option to use some portion of the new federal dollars it will receive to address the staffing crisis. But for this to happen in California requires the outcry of all those who depend on child care.

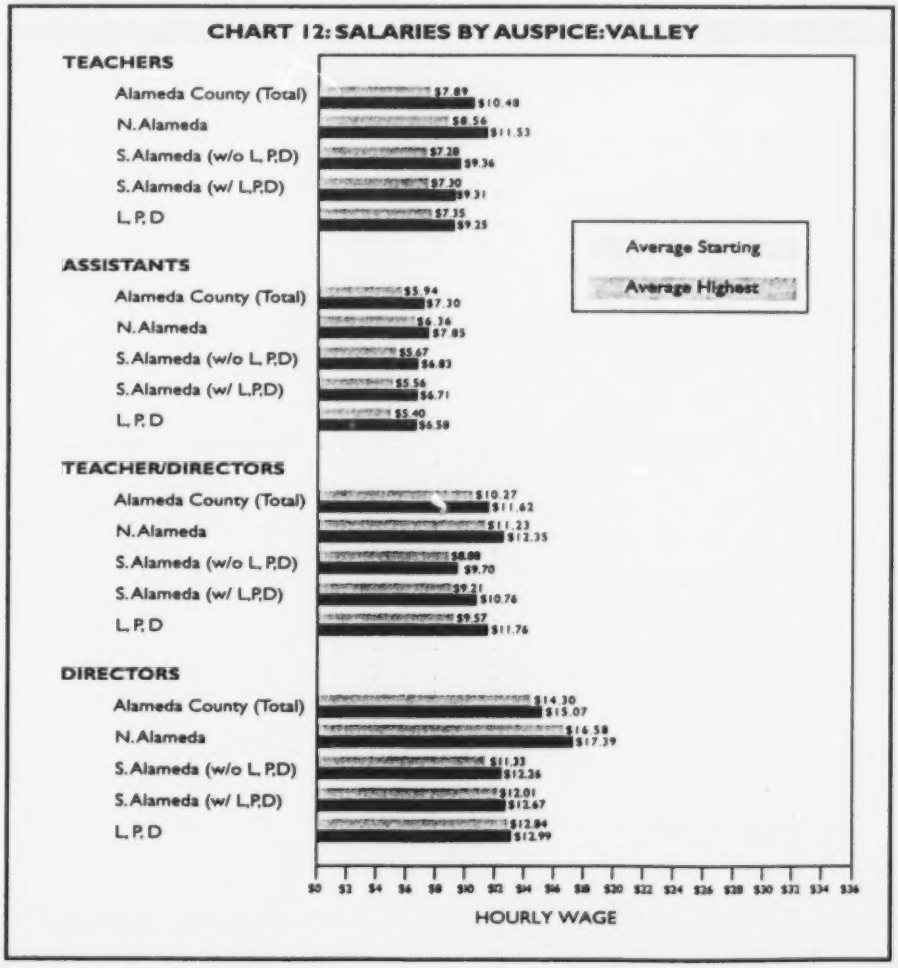
Salaries for this area are described in Chart 12. They fall mid-line for the County. Average staff turnover is high for all program positions except teacher/directors, which was a very small cohort in the sample. Turnover for teachers was 42%, assistants 53%, teacher/directors 6% and directors 50%.

Benefits and working conditions for the Valley area teaching staff are similar to those in the rest of the county.

SUMMARY

High quality child care requires an environment that values adults as well as children. Without major improvements in salaries and working conditions, qualified staff in California and other states will continue to leave the child care field for jobs that offer a living wage. And children will suffer the consequences. Recent research shows that children attending centers with high turnover are less competent in their language and social development.[8]

To improve the adult work environment in child care and thus the developmental environment for children



Parents, early childhood practitioners, employers, and the community at large can become involved in the Worthy Wage Campaign, which is a multi-year effort to focus public awareness on the child care staffing crisis and to develop strategies to secure a skilled and stable child care work force as the cornerstone of quality service.

To learn about the Campaign in the Bay Area, contact the Child Care Employee Project or the Resource and Referral agencies listed below.

Communities depend on child care teachers.

Our future depends on valuing them as well.

FOOTNOTES

1. This study was funded by generous in-kind donations from Child Care Employee Project, BANANAS Resource and Referral, 4C's of Alameda County and Resources for Family Development, and monetary donations from the East Bay Association for the Education of Young Children (EBA-EYC), and Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 790.

2. A written survey published by the Child Care Employee Project.

3. All findings reported are statistically significant unless otherwise noted.

4. Whitebook, M., Howes, C., Phillips, D. (1989) Who Cares? Child Care Teachers and the Quality of Care in America, Oakland, CA: Child Care Employee Project

5. ibid.

6. ibid.

7. ibid.

8. ibid.

Report prepared by the
Child Care Employee Project

For more information about salary data collection and analysis and other resources to improve wages and working conditions of child care teachers, contact:

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